



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 1—7 May 2022

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 1 MAY

SUNDAY OF THOMAS, John 20: 19-31

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.

We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment.

Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.

MONDAY 2 MAY

Transfer of Relics of
St Athanasios the Great

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 10.00am
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall

THURSDAY 5 MAY

St Irene, Great-Martyr

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 8.00—9.00pm

TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP

ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME

Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends,
enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment.

- In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church

SUNDAY 8 MAY

GOSPEL READING: Mark 15: 43—16:8

EPISTLE READING: 1 John 1: 1-7

Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

- on the great desire of God

'God will have all men to be saved' (1 Tim; 2:4).

God desires that all men be saved; for this the Lord Jesus descended into hell, to save those also who had lived on earth before His coming. For, if He had not descended into hell, an enormous number of righteous souls would have perished for ever. And further: if He had not descended into hell, it, the greatest abode of evil against God and the human race, would have remained undestroyed. These two reasons, therefore, woke Christ the life-Giver and sent Him down in spirit into hell: firstly, to destroy the nest of the powers of hell; and secondly, to lead forth from hell to Paradise the souls of our forefathers and the prophets and righteous men and women, who had fulfilled the ancient Law of God and had thus been pleasing to Him. Before Satan had done exulting in Christ's humiliation and death on the Cross, Christ appeared, living and almighty, in the midst of hell, the chief abode of Satan. What unexpected and devastating tidings for Satan! For three years he had plaited a noose for Christ on earth, and in three days Christ destroyed his kingdom and led out the most precious booty in the form of a swarm of righteous souls.

Thou desirest that all men be saved, O Lord. We pray Thee: save us also, for there is neither salvation nor a Saviour apart from Thee. In Thee only do we hope, and Thee alone do we worship, Thee and the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

- on Thomas's proof by experience

My Lord and my God! (John 20:28).

When the Apostle Thomas touched the wounds of the Lord Jesus, he cried: 'My Lord and my God!'

When Mary Magdalene heard the voice of the Risen One in the garden, she exclaimed in her soul: 'My Lord and my God!'

When Saul saw the light and heard the words of the Risen One, he acknowledged: 'My Lord and my God!'

When the pagans beheld how innumerable martyrs endured their sufferings with joy, and asked them who was this Christ, they each answered: 'My Lord and my God'.

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When mockers ridiculed the army of ascetic monks, and asked them who it was for whom they laid on themselves such strict asceticism, they all had only one reply: 'My Lord and my God'.

When mockers ridiculed maidens who had vowed virginity and asked them who it was for whom they scorned marriage, they all had only one reply: 'My Lord and my God'.

When lovers of money asked rich men, in disbelief, for whose sake they had given away their riches and become poor, they answered one and the same thing: 'My Lord and my God'.

Some saw Him, and said: 'My Lord and my God!' Some only heard Him, and said: 'My Lord and my God!' Some touched Him, and said: 'My Lord and my God!' Some perceived Him in the tissue of events and the destinies of peoples, and said: 'My Lord and my God!' Some came to know Him by some sign, either to themselves or to others, and cried out: 'My Lord and my God!' And some only came to hear of Him from others, and believed, and cried: 'My Lord and my God!' Indeed, these last are the most blessed.

Let us also cry with all our hearts, however we have come to the discovery and knowledge of Him: 'My Lord and my God!'

To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

- *The Prologue from Ochrid*, St Nikolai Velimirović

SUNDAY OF THOMAS, John 20: 19-31

HAVE YOU SEEN THE LORD? DOES IT MAKE YOU GLAD TO SEE HIM?

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. John 20:19-20 Thomas Sunday

Christ is Risen!

The Sunday after Pascha is affectionately known as "Thomas Sunday." On Pascha, at the Agape Vespers, we read from John 20:19-25, Christ's first encounter with the Disciples. And on Thomas Sunday, we read John 20:19-31, which includes both the encounter on the evening of Pascha and the second encounter eight days later, when Thomas was present.

On the evening after the Resurrection, which took place on the first day of the week, the Disciples had gathered behind doors that were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He miraculously appeared in their sight. He didn't knock on the door or announce that He was coming. He just "appeared".

He spoke with them, to show that not only was He God, but that He was still human. He had experienced a human death and now He had been resurrected from the dead and was appearing to them not as a ghost, not in a dream, but as a human being. His first words to them are "Peace be with you." Among His last words before His Passion concerned peace as well: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27). It is interesting to note that when Orthodox Christians assemble to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the first three petitions centre around peace. And the introductory petition invites us *"In peace let us pray to the Lord."* This reflects the first words of Christ to His disciples after the Resurrection, "Peace be with you."

Sensing that His Disciples will want some kind of proof that He is actually the same Jesus they saw crucified, He shows them the mark of the nails in His hands, and the mark of the spear that pierced His side. This erases all doubt in their minds that this is the same man whom they saw crucified two days earlier.

The reaction of the Disciples becomes one of joy, not of scepticism. Of course, that is easy for them, for they stand face to face with Christ. We have not stood face to face with Christ yet. Or have we?

Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy and receive Communion, we have the opportunity to touch the Living God. We *taste and see* (Psalm 34:8) the Lord in the Eucharist. And after all have partaken, we sing a hymn: *"We have seen the true Light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity, for the Trinity has saved us."* Does this make us glad? Does this encounter send us away with joy? Or are we sceptical? Or has it even become part of a "routine"?

In the parable of the sower, Jesus says to His disciples, *To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand* (Luke 8:10). This means that some "see" the Lord and yet they don't see Him. Others are looking and they "see" the Lord, and they see Him with the joy that the Disciples saw Christ that evening in Jerusalem.

How, then, do we see Christ? We see Him through the eyes of faith, which are sharpened through the eyes of vulnerability. Make yourself in some way vulnerable to the Lord, whether it is in the spiritual intimacy of prayer, or the difficult task of forgiveness, the humility needed in the sacrament of confession, or in the selfless act of service to others. Make yourself vulnerable to the Lord and you will "see" Him and have the joy that the Disciples had when they saw the Lord.

Of course, as the saying goes, you will only find what you are looking for. If you are not looking for God, you are not likely to find Him. Which goes back to the question posed many reflections ago: "are you a seeker?" We need to be looking for Christ, and we need to look for Him through vulnerability. And when we find Him, let us pray for our reaction to be one of joy.

As You came and stood among Your disciples, O Saviour, and gave them peace, come and be with us also and save us (Hypakoe from Orthros of Thomas Sunday).

May today, His day, be filled with joy, and may you be glad in the time you spend with Him in worship today!

Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis, Orthodox Christian Network